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The Associated Press

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HEADLINE: Doctor Says Hospitals Should Ban Smoking

DATELINE: BOSTON

KEYWORD:
Smoking

BODY:

A telephone company's success in banning smoking on the job should encourage hospitals to prohibit cigarettes, too, a doctor says.

Dr. Michael J. Martin of the University of California in San Francisco said that in the six months since Pacific Northwest Bell barred smoking in its facilities, the results have been impressive. No one has left as a result of the policy, no lawsuits have been filed, and the workers' unions have supported the measure.

Martin, along with Dr. Annette Fehrenbach of the phone company and Robert Rosner of the Smoking Policy Institute at Seattle University, described the results of the policy in a letter published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

They predicted that the experience will almost certainly encourage other large companies to consider such a ban.

"If widely adopted, these policies might have a dramatic effect on the nation's smoking habits," they wrote. "Theoretically, they would encourage people to quit smoking by increasing the social pressure against it and by restricting the time available for it."They said that although some hospitals have already banned smoking, all hospitals should consider doing the same.

"Smoking is the greatest cause of premature death and disability in the United States," they wrote, "and it would be ironic if health care institutions let the general business community take the lead in banning smoking in the work place."

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